



85 of 141 DOCUMENTS

Copyright 2007 The Washington Post

The Washington Post
washingtonpost.com

The Washington Post

January 28, 2007 Sunday
Final Edition

SECTION: Southern Maryland Extra; T02

LENGTH: 1189 words

HEADLINE: Eyes Opened on Diversity I w ...

BODY:

I was fortunate enough to be at the Unity in Our Community: A Call to Action forum Jan. 20 at the College of Southern Maryland. When you walked through the doors to be registered, you could feel the energy that was generated by the roughly 300 people assembled in the auditorium. The place was loaded with people from all walks of life. I felt that this was going to be a very productive day.

The mission of the forum was to show why a commission on diversity and intergroup relations had to be formed. Diversity was the key word that was ever present during the day, echoed by all the speakers, the officials and by most of the organizers. My hat is off to Charles County Commissioner Edith J. Patterson (D-Pomfret) and state Sen. Thomas M. "Mac" Middleton (D-Charles) and the members of their staffs. I saw a side of Mac Middleton that I had never seen before. I saw the intensity of his determination to bring his native Charles County into the 21st century. The main theme of that desire is to eradicate all forms of racism.

He, along with all the people who attended, know that this is necessary to attract the type of businesses that the county desires. Speaking of business, we are very fortunate to have brought in John Reardon, the county economic development director.

I have known Mac Middleton and Del. Murray D. Levy (D-Charles) since 1986 and have watched these two men give so much of themselves to the welfare of Charles County, and yet they were right in there with Edith Patterson and Commissioners President Wayne Cooper (D-At Large), giving their all to this forum.

I want to congratulate the organizers for bringing in both Art King and Forrest Parker as motivational speakers. They were superb. I want to congratulate the people who were in attendance, for the energy they generated could have

fueled a train from here to New York. The attitude of the crowd and the wonderful enthusiasm that was shown throughout the day was so unusual and so unexpected. You could see that all these people were eager to see the fulfillment of the subject matter that was brought to our attention.

Another important feature was the love for Charles County that was shown. I was very proud to be considered a full-fledged Charles Countian. I had to laugh when Commissioner Sam Graves (D-La Plata), a new commissioner who was also one of the sponsors of the Chick-fil-A box lunches, made the announcement that the more than 300 lunch boxes had arrived and received a standing ovation.

I can't quote all the events, but I was impressed by the stirring words of our new sheriff, Rex Coffey (D), and doubly impressed when the new majority leader of the House, Steny H. Hoyer (D), took the time from his busy schedule to address us with his very dramatic words.

All I can say is that Edith Patterson and Wayne Cooper have opened up a whole new vision for all of us. Let us all keep on being proud of our Charles County and let the blue ribbon commission do its job.

Lemon H. Moses Jr.

Waldorf

A Jan. 5 article in the local papers in Calvert County concerning our low air quality did not come as a shock to many of us residents. Some of us have noticed a change in air quality in the past two years; some school-age children seem to have more allergy problems, and a few others have periodic asthma attacks. According to the article, about 64 percent of the air toxins come from cars and trucks.

In Calvert County, the residents' vehicles are required to be tested and meet the emission requirements of the state Motor Vehicle Administration. Calvert County has the 15th-worst air quality among the 23 counties in the state, according to a report by Environment Maryland, a public interest research group.

During the approval procedure for the proposal to expand the Cove Point liquefied natural gas plant, it was reported that the expansion's expected air pollution impact would be equivalent to the emissions from 4,000 additional cars and trucks. If the air quality office at the Maryland Department of the Environment was aware of emission problems in Calvert County in spite of our efforts to reduce pollution problems, why was the MDE willing to ignore the difference that the added pollution from the expansion would make instead of finding a way to lower it?

Also, during the MDE hearings, as part of the Cove Point expansion approval procedure, there were explanations or discussions by the MDE about "trading off" pollution with some other areas -- a benefit for them, but more pollution for our county. This kind of discussion, as explained, did not seem to have any reason or benefit to our county, which already has low air quality.

Many residents were "irked" by these suggestions, as one newspaper headline stated. Our residents felt that not one additional scintilla of pollution should be considered by the MDE to accommodate another out-of-state energy corporation to save them from expense by abusing the health and safety of Calvert residents as well as abusing our land, destroying our mature forests and ruining our waterways. The Cove Point expansion proposal should not be permitted to cause any more carcinogens or toxic pollutants to be put in our air.

Allyson J. Sigler

Port Tobacco

Editor's note: The writer also sent this letter to the secretary of the Maryland Department of the Environment.

Your First Amendment rights were protected in a late session Jan. 18. In a vote on the floor of the U.S. Senate, 55

senators voted in favor of and 43 voted against an amendment that took language out of the lobby reform legislation (S 1) that was intended to silence you, the people. And how did our senators from Maryland vote? Both Barbara A. Mikulski (D) and Benjamin L. Cardin (D) voted against the amendment. Why would our senators vote to take away a First Amendment right? Well, maybe you should call and ask them yourself.

I do know this, that had the language stayed in that piece of legislation, it would have made it harder for you and me to find out what was going to be brought up on the floor for a vote in Congress. Our Congress is supposed to be representing us, the people. And we the people have the right to peaceably assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances. Those 43 senators who voted against the amendment, proposed by Sen. Robert F. Bennett (R-Utah), were trying to limit our right to petition our own government, as the First Amendment allows.

I urge you to call your senators and respectfully let them know that you are putting them on notice and that you are watching them and the way they vote. Here is their contact information: Sen. Mikulski, 202-224-4654 or mikulski.senate.gov and click on "Contact Me"; Sen. Cardin, 202-224-4524 or cardin.senate.gov and click on "Contact."

I want to remind you that there will still be many times in the future when you and other concerned citizens will be asked to contact your elected officials in support of family values. So please get in the habit of calling your elected representatives so that they will know how you feel on these and other important issues.

Joe DiMarco

Mechanicsville

LOAD-DATE: January 28, 2007